1	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2	FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY
3	CIVIL ACTION NUMBER:
4	IN RE: VALSARTAN PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION 1:19-md-02875-RBK-JS
5	STATUS CONFERENCES
6	(Via telephone)
7	Wednesday, August 26, 2020 Commencing at 10 a.m.
8	B E F O R E: THE HONORABLE JOEL SCHNEIDER,
9	UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE THE HONORABLE ROBERT B. KUGLER,
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20	Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography; transcript produced by computer-aided transcription.

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             ALL PARTIES VIA TELEPHONE, August 26, 2020,
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    9:58 a.m.)
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: This is Judge Schneider. We're on
    a phone call. When I called in, there was a message that
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    there are 51 people on this call. I think that's a record.
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             We're here on the Valsartan MDL litigation, Docket
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    No. 19-2875. I don't think we need everyone's entry of
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    appearance on the phone, unless someone has a particular need
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    to enter their appearance. But why don't we just hear from
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    the lead counsel for the plaintiffs and defendants and those
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    who expect to talk during this call.
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             Start with plaintiffs.
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             MR. SLATER: Good morning, Your Honor, Adam Slater on
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    behalf of the plaintiffs.
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             MR. HONIK: Good morning, Your Honor, Ruben Honik for
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    the plaintiffs.
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             MR. NIGH: Good morning, Your Honor, Daniel Nigh for
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    the plaintiffs.
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             MS. WHITELY: Good morning, Your Honor, Conlee
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    Whitely for plaintiffs.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: And how about the defendants?
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             MR. GOLDBERG: Good morning, Your Honor, this is Seth
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    Goldberg for the ZHP parties and defendants.
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             MS. LOCKARD: Good morning, it's Victoria Lockard for
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    the Teva defendants and defense executive committee.
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             MR. TRISCHLER: Good morning, Your Honor, Clem
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    Trischler for the Mylan entities.
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             MR. GEOPPINGER: Good morning, Your Honor, Jeffrey
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    Geoppinger for AmerisourceBergen and wholesaler defendants.
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                           And good morning, Your Honor, this is
             MS. JOHNSTON:
    Sarah Johnston for the retailer defendants and CVS.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: I received the letters from
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    counsel. Thank you very much. Judge Kugler has the letters
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              After we're done with our issues that we need to
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    address, he's on notice that he'll join us for any issues that
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    he needs to address.
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             Before we get to the agenda, are the parties --
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    there's just one issue I'd like to address with the parties.
    There's been a number of recent motions to amend that have
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    been filed. I know the local rule provides that you have to
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    indicate whether there's any objection to the motion. It's a
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    little awkward with so many parties in this case, but do any
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    of the defendants have any objection to the motions to amend
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    that have been filed?
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             I just wonder if we can just routinely grant those
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    without waiting for the return date to see if there's an
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    objection or not.
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             Defendants, what do you think?
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             MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, this is Seth Goldberg.
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    have to say, I'm not familiar -- I haven't noticed those
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What I suggest is, why don't I confer with the entire defense group after this call and just confirm that we don't have an objection, and then we can let Mr. Slater know and we can send Your Honor a short note letting you know. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Fair enough. Very reasonable. No problem. Okay. Why don't we get to the agendas of the issues the parties want to address. Let me just -- bear with me one moment. Plaintiff, why don't we start with you, any issues you want to address and then we'll go to defendants, and if you can just say your name before you talk so that the court reporter knows who's talking. And whoever is not talking, can you please put your phone on mute so that the transcript will be clear. Plaintiffs, the floor is yours. MR. SLATER: Thank you, Your Honor, it's Adam Slater for the record. Just following the order of the letter we submitted to Your Honor, the first thing that we raised to the Court is the issue of the status of the rolling productions. We also attached our letter to the defense from about a week or two ago, about two weeks ago. That's Exhibit A. So Your Honor has exactly what issues we had identified, and what we've tried to do is identify what we

think are some glaring clear examples of things that we would

have hoped would not have been issues to start off this discussion and hopefully maybe head off some other issues going forward.

So, you know, in no particular order of importance, it's now been established that I don't believe we have up-to-date privilege logs. We don't have up-to-date compliant production logs, although I think that issue is being somewhat fixed. There is one column of information. I think an agreement has been reached with at least ZHP and Aurobindo as to what is going to be populated in that column in terms of the source of documents that are on the production log. But, you know, those are basic things that we really would need to have in any case and we really feel like that should be brought current right away.

And then the other major area in the productions, is that the prioritization, which was put in place months and months ago and everybody was clear that that was something that was supposed to be given a focus. It has not been accomplished yet and we don't have -- we don't even have certainty from defendants at this point as to when that will be accomplished. And you know, we asked for previously, I understood why the Court said, you know, we're not going to have the defendants give you a timeline for production in advance, but we're now, you know, approaching 45 days that this production has been ongoing and we don't have, for

example, from ZHP as we pointed out, all of the documents, including the ESI with the e-mails and all the metadata on the e-mails and all attachments were sent between Novartis and ZHP, which is obviously a watershed moment in this entire saga, because that's when the issue was brought to the attention of ZHP and then to the regulators.

So the fact that we don't have that done and we're told in the letter, well, we're going to be continuing to get documents to you over the next few weeks, that tells us, is very concerning because if something that clear has not been taken care of yet, it raises a whole host of questions.

The second really glaring area that we thought was an easy area to present at this first step is the testing, both the testing for NDMA when they went back to the pills to test and the chromatography testing by the API manufacturers who were testing the batches to make sure that the peaks matched up to the ingredients which we believe, once we have those complete records, we'll be able to show that the defendants have all the information they need to identify the NDMA back at the start and when they were in production.

So those were a couple of very, you know, clear examples to us and nobody has said they've completed production of any of the testing, and we just -- we really feel like we need at this point certainty on that, so that -- and really hopefully, you know, cemented this for the

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defendants to start to really work with us on the prioritization and exchange information and tell us what they're doing and give the Court some certainty that this is happening. I'll put aside the additional custodians as a separate subject. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Well, I did read the defendants' letter that was attached to Mr. Goldberg's letter and as I read those letters, they appear to indicate that -- I think there was only one of the parties, this might have been Teva, I'm not sure, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but only one of the parties was asserting privilege objections. Everybody else represented that there's nothing to put on a privilege log, but at least to date, they're not asserting any privilege objections, and if I remember correctly, I don't have the letter in front of me, what Teva defendants said that they were withholding documents on privilege grounds. I think they said the privilege log is in the works. Am I wrong about that, Mr. Slater? MR. SLATER: I think that's generally what was It's just that, for example, it really at this point, stated. we don't want to have to keep checking on issues that are that

each production and if a defendant has no privilege redactions

simple, obviously. So if it's in the works, from our

perspective, the ESI protocol said it should be served with

and those documents would help, it's very easy for them to just say that their production -- there's no production, there's still no privilege log, because we have not withheld or redacted anything. I mean, at least then we'll be up to date and we won't have to keep asking and they're supposed to under the protocol just tell us. So if that's the case and they never withhold the document, that makes it easy, but they should tell us.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Mr. Goldberg, let me just butt in here. I think that's a good idea, rather than plaintiff assuming that if there's no privilege log, then nothing is withheld. I think the better course of action would be with the defendants' additions, if they indicate that the reason no privilege log is being produced is because no documents were withheld, and if the ESI protocol has a deadline for producing the logs, then defendants have to comply with that.

MS. LOCKARD: Your Honor, it's Victoria Lockard from Teva. If I may, because we are the party who addressed this. We have produced documents that have some redactions, privilege, and potentially have been withheld for privilege and we are preparing a privilege log, you know, the ESI protocol itself does not state that privilege log has to be provided simultaneously with every interim production.

You know, we don't agree that it's that clear, you know. We do agree, we have an obligation to provide one and

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we intend to provide one, but if we are to provide privilege logs on the day of the production, I can tell you, it is going to significantly slow down the process and, you know, we'd like to avoid the scenario where we're bottlenecking, actually giving the records -- the documents over to plaintiffs, because we have to send them, you know, through a privilege review of our privilege set, get the log created so that we can get that submitted. So, you know, what we had proposed in the letter is that we meet and confer with counsel to actually agree to some sort of timeline for how quickly these need to be produced on a trailing basis after the rolling interim productions are made. That, to me, seems much more efficient and will ensure that plaintiffs are getting the documents they need, you know, and we certainly intend to provide the privilege log. You know, there's no prejudice to them if it takes, you know, 60 days to get the privilege log submitted after a production. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: I think your comment that it's more important to produce the documents than the logs is correct. Rather than meeting and conferring, let's just agree on a date now, if it's not clear in the protocol how long after a rolling production a privilege log has to be produced, you

Any objection, Mr. Slater?

mentioned 60 days.

MR. SLATER: Yes, Your Honor. The protocol is clear.

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    They're supposed to update these logs with each production.
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    I've never had a defendant ever say they couldn't comply with
    that. I'm not really sure what this bottleneck issue is.
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    It's just a log. You know, frankly, I would prefer not to
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    change the protocol at this point, because it says that
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    they're supposed to do it as it rolled out. I'm not sure how
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    there could be a different reading.
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             But I mean, if they want to have, you know, two days
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    or something after, that's fine, but this has to be -- it's a
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    rolling process, so if they're talking 60 days, we're going to
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    talk about getting our last privilege log in January or so?
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    mean, we really can't agree to push this out. It's a basic
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    thing that was -- that's in the protocol already. So if they
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    need a couple days after the production, that's not the end of
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    the world, but to update, but it's never been an issue.
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    never had a defendant say they couldn't do it. So I'm not
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    really sure what this issue is.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: I'm looking at the ESI protocol
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          I agree, if it's clear in the protocol, I'm not going to
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    change the order, but do you -- can you point to a specific
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    page or paragraph that --
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             MR. PAREKH: This is Behram Parekh.
                                                  It's at
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    Paragraph A on Page 16.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER:
                               Page 16.
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                           It does not say anything about the
             MS. LOCKARD:
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rolling production, Your Honor, because when this was negotiated, there was no schedule for rolling or interim production. Our production in response to the RFPs, and the ESI effort is due on November 2nd.

Now, there are interim milestones for production throughout that time, but there's nothing in the ESI that says it has to be made with every interim rolling production.

That's not how we read it. And, you know, if that's just a different interpretation, so be it. But the practical matter is, it is going to slow down the process of getting the documents out, because we will have to divert resources to that effort, and there's no reason that plaintiffs need the privilege log immediately on the day that production is made. There's just no -- there's no reason for it. It's not efficient.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Let's move on. I see

Paragraph A. It could be read to say -- it says, quote

unquote, each production. It doesn't say rolling production.

It says, "Each production" which, in my view, anticipates more than one.

But be that as it may, the most important point is to get the documents in plaintiffs' hands. So let's say within 30 days of the rolling production, a privilege log has to be produced and I assume that when the production is made, it will be made clear, yes or no, whether any documents are being

withheld on the grounds of privilege.

So that's the privilege issue.

On the prioritization issue, Mr. Slater, you know, I have this comment, that we've been through this issue many, many, many times before. If you talk with defendants and you can't work it out about these prioritization issues, send me a letter and be as specific as possible what documents you want to move to the forefront, and I'll order that they have to be included in the next production, unless there's good cause to excuse their production.

The testing documents, we've been talking about this since the fall. So I don't disagree that they should be at the top of the list. E-mail is a little bit different, that's a lot broader category, but certainly the testing documents, we've been talking about those for months and months and months, and I would anticipate that they would be at the top of your prioritization list as well as the defendants' efforts to produce those documents.

So if you can't work it out with defense counsel, send me a letter, tell me what you want prioritized and I'll just order it, okay?

MR. SLATER: Yeah, I mean, I can tell Your Honor for purposes of this call, the testing, both for NDMA and for chromatography of the API, et cetera, the quality testing that was done during the production processes. That stuff, you

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know, we want that as soon as we can get it. We thought it
was going to be all produced to us in the initial productions,
it's noncustodial, that's what we were told. So the idea that
it's still going to come -- so that's one thing that we could
          I don't see how there could be an objection to a
date certain in near future.
         The second area again that we touched on in our
letters, Novartis documents with ZHP. There's -- they know
exactly who was involved in that. It was the major -- it was
the major point on which the contamination became known and it
was obviously the thing that triggered the notification to the
FDA and the recall.
         So we're at August 26, and don't have that, when the
production started six weeks ago, that's another area that
they should be able to, if they -- I mean, I can't imagine
they haven't already done it, pulled all those documents
together and get them to us as soon as possible because our
experts certainly really need all the testing and all the
Novartis documents.
         JUDGE SCHNEIDER: When is the next rolling
production?
         MR. GOLDBERG: September 1st.
         (Crosstalk)
         MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, this is Seth Goldberg.
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I'll just respond briefly on these points about -- based from

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ZHP's standpoint, testing and Novartis, which are ZHP-specific, and I can assure you that my colleague, Joe Ferretti has been meeting and conferring with Mr. Slater's colleague, Behram Parekh. They have reached some agreements as to the production of batch records which we'll be producing on Friday. We will be producing nitrosamine testing records this Friday, as well as documents from the priority custodians, a lot of Novartis documents, documents relating to Novartis have been produced in core discovery and already, you know, there are likely documents relating to Novartis within the e-mail of custodians. Your Honor may recall the first custodial production, at least for ZHP, is to begin on September 1st, and so Friday, plaintiffs will be getting a lot of the information you're looking for and, of course, this is a rolling production, not everything that they want is going to be produced on Friday, but we are most certainly doing what Your Honor asked us to do, which is to adhere to their prioritization in good faith, which we are doing, and we'll continue to do and we'll continue to meet and confer on these issues. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Mr. Slater, it sounds like you're going to get a good deal of what you want by September 1st, and I would anticipate no later than October 1st you should have the bulk of what you want from the defendants in terms of the priority documents.

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that takes care of that.

MR. SLATER: I hope so, Your Honor, but I -- you know, hearing that the documents are going to be produced and that they're in process is wonderful. A deadline by which these key documents have to be produced, I think without that, we're going to be having this conversation in October again. It's just going to keep going, because until there's a firm deadline on these points, I have no confidence that we'll be able to get to finality on them, and it could be very important documents that are the straggler documents. know, it could just be, oh, well, with these couple of preproduction ramp-up documents on some API testing, we just, you know, pulled those together for you the end of November when there are potentially in other key documents showing the peaks. Again, I'm making up that scenario because I don't have the documents, but that's the type of thing we're looking for. And just leaving it open like this, to me, tells me we're going to be arguing over key documents until the end. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: I got it. I'll take care of it in the next order to be entered, something to the effect that by October 1st -- I'm not quite sure of the language yet, but

something to the effect, the bulk of the documents or -- I'm

not quite sure, but there will be something in the next order

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MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, this is Seth Goldberg.
         JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Hold on. I was just going to add,
Mr. Goldberg, there has to be a safety valve for the
defendants that -- well, it just might be the case that --
undue difficulty getting all of these documents.
         So there will have to be some safety valve.
         MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, I will just -- I would
just like to respond, because this is -- this is -- what just
occurred is really a relitigation of the prioritization issue,
which Your Honor decided a few months ago, in conjunction with
setting a rolling production, and said to prioritize
custodians, prioritize certain kinds of documents, and
instructed the parties to act in good faith to do that.
         And the parties are doing that, and the concern I
have with Your Honor changing that order now, as we have set
up our workloads and adhered to the prioritization and now are
being asked to advance the rolling production to October 1st,
is going to put a burden on the defendants when this issue is
already litigated and decided, and if every time we have a
court -- a conference, plaintiffs can raise an issue that has
already been decided and relitigate that issue, we cannot have
-- we cannot meet the Court's deadlines, we cannot satisfy our
clients and work with our clients in an efficient way to get
the information to plaintiffs.
         There is no -- there are no defendants that are not
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attempting to meet the prioritization. They've identified the key custodians they want. My understanding is all of the defendants are front-loading those custodians and plaintiffs are getting that information. Whatever documents they had prioritized, they are getting that.

And to change the orders that Your Honor has issued months ago is going to really create a problem for defendants, and it seems that that is what is happening on every one of these case management conferences, and of course, we're going to have three more months of rolling productions and every month, or every two weeks, plaintiffs are going to say there are deficiencies, there are problems, things aren't yet produced. But that is the nature of a rolling production, and Your Honor has been very clear with defendants that what Your Honor doesn't want is a document dump in December, and that's very clear — or November, and that's very clear to defendants.

I would say that while Mr. Slater is saying to Your Honor that there are things that are missing, that Your Honor adhere to the order that you previously entered, which is a rolling production, prioritize based on plaintiffs' prioritization without any changes, let us produce our documents, let's deal with real issues on a biweekly basis and we'll get to the end of this production in a way that's satisfactory to plaintiffs and the Court.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Mr. Slater, we dealt with the privilege log issue, they're working out the compliant production log issue. We touched on the prioritization issue.

What's the next issue you want to address?

MR. SLATER: This is an issue that I think it's the right time to start the discussion, which is this: In reviewing the documents, the few documents that have been produced so far, we gave some examples in the letter of a few people that it became clear to us were people that should have been identified as custodians upfront by the manufacturers that were not, and this is based on what we're reviewing, and we gave the information in the letter, and these are cut-down lists. These are just a few people. We didn't -- there's a lot of people we're learning about that we probably should have been told about, but we're trying to be very narrow and make these, you know, easy ones.

So we don't expect Your Honor today to say these additional custodians need to be searched, but, you know, there's only a few. We've given some background on them. The defense was, no, no way. So that seemed to us something that we needed to alert the Court to, that we know that we need to talk to the defense, but we don't want to leave this until the end.

We'd like to, as we identify people that matter, be able to talk to them and bring that to the Court just because

we don't want to have to do a whole new set of work at the end. I was going to -- yeah, we hope there's not going to be a lot of new people, and again, for ZHP, we listed three and it turned out one of them is just known by another name, so we already had the person under a different name, so that was fine. But it's two people.

We just -- I think we need to be able to talk and I think we need to get this keyed up for the next conference but we wanted to put it before Your Honor because we got the sense from the defense's response that there's no understanding on that side that custodians can be added under certain circumstances.

MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor -- go ahead, I'm sorry.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Let me just add before we hear from you, Mr. Goldberg. I'm not going to make a ruling on this issue today, because we don't have a record.

The Court has said there has to be established good cause. I haven't heard really why there's good cause yet and I haven't heard ZHP's response, but, you know, one thought I had was, it just is not productive to do this on a piecemeal basis that every phone call we're going to deal with one or two or three custodians. I mean, I would hope there would come a time when there would be one omnibus request and we'll deal with it, rather than dealing with piecemeal requests.

If you think you're ready to tee up these issues,

these custodians, and they're that important, you know, submit a letter brief in a week, defendants respond in a week and we'll tee up the issue for the next phone call, but certainly, we can't decide the issue today.

Mr. Goldberg?

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MR. SLATER: No, we're not asking you to, Your Honor, and we'll try to talk to the defendants and maybe we can reach some common ground.

MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, I don't want to belabor the point since we're going to talk about the issue, but I just -- I do want to comment on Mr. Slater's point, the defendants seem to be rejecting these out of hand and don't appreciate that plaintiffs may want to add custodians. just that the three custodians they've identified at least for ZHP were objectionable on the face of their request. One of them is already a custodian. The second one is a custodian they originally proposed, but did not in their list of 140, but when Your Honor asked them to pare down to 81, did not select that person, and of the two documents that that person is on, there are at least five other custodians that are already -- that are on that document, too, and the third custodian is also on documents with other custodians, and that person is a business development manager in Spain, and, of course, the sale of Valsartan in Spain and Europe is not at issue here.

And these things were all obvious on the face of the documents that plaintiffs provided. And, you know, Your Honor may recall, this was a painstaking process to get to a list for ZHP of 81 custodians, far more than any other defendant, that included the interview of Jun Du, J-U-N D-U, with Your Honor present, and included the benefit of core discovery, and so, you know, we understand the standard to -- for cause here to be fairly high, and on the face of these documents, these custodians or proposed custodians certainly would not satisfy that standard.

But we're happy to work with plaintiffs on this issue. I'm sure all defendants will be happy to meet and confer on these issues and agree, Your Honor, that doing this piecemeal may end up to be fairly inefficient.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: We should move on, but the comfort that the defendants can take is that as the Court has said time and time again, there has to be a showing of good cause to add or remove custodians, and we'll just leave it at that.

Any other issues, Mr. Slater?

MR. SLATER: I think the other issue that we raised that had some significance is the deposition protocol. Your Honor had brought that up and we submitted to Your Honor what we had sent to the defense over a month ago and we're just waiting to hear from them. So, you know, we're ready to move forward with that process. We just need the defense to let us

know if that protocol works for them and, you know, hopefully, we will get it entered soon.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Agreed. We ought to also talk about, if not today, soon, Mr. Slater, I think we need to hear from plaintiffs about their plan for these depositions, the protocol will take care of itself, the mechanics of the deps but, you know, is plaintiff going to start with -- with the API people, the finished dose people, individuals, 30(b)(6), start a discussion of how many and where, issues like that.

Is it too early, have the plaintiffs formulated a general plan about how they attempt to proceed with the deposition?

MR. SLATER: I think we probably need to come back to Your Honor with a plan. We are obviously talking about it on our end, and most of it is geared towards, you know, the production, getting the defendants' productions done, and I guess this harkens back to the -- the plans of litigation in terms of, you know, which defendants are going to be the likely -- likely defendant to trial, so we can focus on those defendants I think first.

I think, you know, that would be very helpful to us to have an understanding of just, for example, ZHP would be the first defendant along potentially with the finished dose manufacturers, you know, we would want to focus the depositions towards those defendants early on, just because it

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would be more efficient and, you know, if that's also the plan
for the class cert process, then that also helps us to know
who we have to depose and what proofs we need for that
briefing.
         So I think it's a little bit -- we're going to have
some understanding of, you know, how we're going to proceed,
but, you know, and I think that will then trigger dates and
trigger the order in which we would take depositions.
         JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Well, I think you've got to get
started on a plan before you get rulings on that issue,
because if I recollect correctly, I think Judge Kugler said
the motions -- after the motions are going to be decided, then
I think it will clarify a little bit, you know, the trial
plan.
         But, what, your briefing is going to be done when,
October, November?
         MR. GOLDBERG: I was going to say, Your Honor, the
motion to dismiss briefing is supposed to be completed around
the third week of October, I believe.
         JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Yes, and I don't know when those --
         MR. SLATER: I think, Judge --
         JUDGE SCHNEIDER: -- decided, so we have to get a
plan in motion before there's going to be a ruling on those
motions.
        MR. SLATER: Well, we'll present to Your Honor, you
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1 know, maybe for the next conference, you know, an outline of 2 the plan. 3 JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay, great. MR. SLATER: I think in either case, it makes sense 4 5 to start with the API manufacturers anyway, just to give you a 6 little bit of, you know, a sense of where our thinking is, 7 because that's obviously where it starts from. 8 JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Great. Mr. Goldberg, I think the 9 point is well-taken. Can we have a definite date when the 10 defendants are going to respond to the dep protocol that the 11 plaintiffs served? MR. GOLDBERG: Yeah, Your Honor, we -- and we put it 12 13 in our letter, and then we're hoping to get it to them next 14 Wednesday, September 2nd. I believe we -- as I said in the 15 letter, we do think the Benicar protocol, you know, provides a 16 good framework. There are -- there are obviously different 17 circumstances here, we've got a number of defendants, you 18 know, 50 or so defendants here. I think there were three in 19 Benicar. 20 We have many more foreign national deponents from a 21 number of different countries, some of which are going to 22 require depositions in different locations, some of which 23 there may be jurisdictional issues, and you know, Hague 24 Convention protocols would apply, and what we're trying to do

is collect comments from the defense group as to those issues

to make sure that we're, you know, we're incorporating them into our revisions to the protocol, and also as meet and confer discussions with plaintiffs on these issues.

It just may be that this is going to end up a little bit more complicated than just adopting the Benicar proposal outright, and, you know, COVID-19 obviously presents different issues, plaintiffs have proposed some language around that which, you know, we have to think through. So, you know, hopefully, next Wednesday, we'll have something to plaintiffs and that will be the start of some productive discussions about the protocol.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Yes, I think you're right,
Mr. Goldberg, I don't think there's really any disagreement
about the fact that the protocol is going to be a lot more
complicated in this case than Benicar was. That's why it's
good to start tackling these issues now starting in September,
so we can have it all wrapped up so you can start taking
depositions in the December or January time period.

We also have to -- I think the defendants should get together and talk about their plan for taking the -- at least the class reps' depositions. I would assume they want to take all of those depositions. Your group --

MR. GOLDBERG: Yep.

JUDGE SCHNEIDER: -- or all the defendant groups might want to start formulating some sort of a plan about how

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they want to proceed with that. That's going to be a lot easier, I think, than the defendants' deps, and get some sort of, you know, summary to the plaintiffs and start chewing on it.
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If you get -- if the plaintiffs get your comments by September 2nd, we can start talking about these issues during our mid-September phone call. I don't anticipate it's going to be finalized by then, but it's good to get a head start, which will give us plenty of time to have things finalized sometime in the fall. And so you're going to get that, plaintiffs.

Any other issues for the plaintiffs -- some of the issues overlap, but when we get to defendants' issues, we can talk about the fact sheets, order to show causes, et cetera.

MS. GOLDENBERG: This is Marlene Goldenberg for plaintiffs. I just wanted to chime in that on the fact sheet issue. We actually were able to work through a few of these issues last evening after the agenda letters had been submitted. So I just wanted to flag that as far as the cases are listed on -- I believe it's the second listing, it's the second table that's included in the defendants' agenda letter, there are -- my understanding from Golden law office is that the Needy case is going to be dismissed by the Golden law office. That's No. 1 on the second table that was provided by the defendants, and the Kim Thompson case also represented by

Golden law office. My understanding from speaking with them,	
that case is also going to be dismissed, and so I don't think	
we need any rulings from the Court on that case. And then the	
Wilson case, which is No. 4 on the second table, the attorney	
and defense counsel were able to come to an agreement last	
evening as well.	
So of those four cases, the only one remaining is the	
second case on the table, which is David Stano's case.	
JUDGE SCHNEIDER: I'd like to address that when we	
get to the defendants' issues, so we have it in chronological	
order. But it's heartening to see the parties are meeting and	
conferring on these issues.	
Anything else for the plaintiffs?	
MR. SLATER: I don't think we had anything that was	
pressing unless anybody else sees something else that they	
think that they need to raise, I don't think there was	
anything else from our perspective. This is Adam Slater for	
the record.	
JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Mr. Goldberg, let's deal with your	
issues.	
MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, I don't know that	
defendants have issues except for the plaintiff fact sheets.	
JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Is there a request for	
orders to show causes?	
MS. LOCKARD: Yes, Your Honor. It's Victoria	

1 Lockard. We do have a request to show cause on --2 JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Let's save that for Judge 3 But I mean, are there any disputes about the cases 4 you want orders to show cause issued on? 5 I think the only thing that I would LOCKARD: 6 add is that, you know, plaintiffs are stating that for two of 7 these cases that, you know, they had heard that there will be 8 a dismissal forthcoming at some point from plaintiffs' 9 counsel, and we don't think that should derail our process in 10 seeking to show cause order. 11 We intend to seek a show cause order. If the show 12 cause order is resolved in our favor, then we get a dismissal 13 with prejudice and, you know, within that period of time, if 14 plaintiffs dismiss the case, and that's fine, but just that 15 oh, well some point, you know, need to go ahead and dismiss 16 the cases or the Court needs to issue a show cause order on 17 this. So we do not agree that, you know, the Court can just back down from those and take those off the list. 18 19 I will say as to the Wilson case, we have agreed. 20 This is one where we did get a resolution yesterday and have 21 agreed to take it off the list for this cycle in order to get 22 the deficiencies resolved, which had been promised. 23

MS. McLAFFERTY: Your Honor, if I can jump in. This is Irene McLafferty from Messa Associates representing Raymond Betz.

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Our case was one on the final list as the first listing of not having filed the PFS but we have filed the PFS. I'm not sure why we're on the list because it was uploaded to MDL Centrality on July 28. So I have instructed my office to directly send a copy to Mr. Goldberg and to refile it, but I'm not really sure, so I would object to an order to show cause being issued in that case. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Is that an issue that is -- there is a person that is the focal point to coordinate these discussions, right? Is that you, Ms. Lockard? MS. LOCKARD: I am involved in that, yes. I'm one of the points for this issue. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: So the counsel who just spoke, should she be talking with whoever your designee is? MS. LOCKARD: Yes, she should, and we had a -- we have meet and confer calls scheduled periodically on these, and I don't believe this was addressed on that meet and confer call, but we'll be glad to talk. This particular case is a first listing, so we're not requesting a show cause. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay, good. MS. LOCKARD: So there will be a meet and confer opportunity to try to resolve this, and if this is true that it's been submitted and it's complete, then we should be able to take it off the list before the second listing. JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Great. Okay. So you're not

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    going to request -- you're not going to ask Judge Kugler to
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    issue an order to show cause on that one, right?
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             MS. LOCKARD: Correct.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Great. All right. Anything
    else we need to address on this call?
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             MR. GOLDBERG: Nothing from defendants, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay. Let me make a suggestion,
    just to make it easier. I'll hang up from this call, let
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    Judge Kugler know, you know, we're ready to proceed, and I
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    would anticipate that he'll get on the line no later than
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    11 o'clock. So if you can -- if you want to hang up and call
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    back in, or better yet, just hang on the phone and maybe just
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    start talking about whatever you have to talk about, I'll just
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    alert Judge Kugler to what we talked about, and whatever
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    issues you want to raise with him are fine. I know the order
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    to show cause issue is going to be raised.
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             I hope when I hang up, or at least put the phone on
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    hold, it doesn't disconnect everybody. If it does, call back
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    in at 11, okay?
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             MR. SLATER: We will.
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             JUDGE SCHNEIDER: Okay.
                                      Thanks, everybody.
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             RESPONSE:
                        Thank you, Judge.
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             (Recess 10:50 to 10:59 a.m.)
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             JUDGE KUGLER: You want to talk about these listings
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    and orders to show cause?
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MR. SLATER: That's fine. Go ahead, Victoria.
         MS. LOCKARD: Your Honor, Victoria Lockard, I'm going
to address this part for -- on behalf of the defendant.
yes, we have -- you have before you the defendants' position
statement. We have two categories of cases.
         The first are cases where the Court agreed to issue
show cause orders at the last date -- last month, and we
originally started with 12 of those cases. Judge Schneider
indicated that show cause orders were issued on those,
although I know we did not see the show cause orders come
across, but be that as it may, we have, out of those 12 cases,
we have resolved six of them or at least six of them have
provided plaintiffs' fact sheets in the interim period and so
today, we're seeking dismissals for the remaining six where no
plaintiff fact sheet has yet to be filed.
         JUDGE KUGLER: Let's go through them. Give me the
captions on one through six, please.
         MS. LOCKARD: Okay. So we have -- the first is
Marcia Cantrell. You just want the last name?
         JUDGE KUGLER: Last name and the docket number.
                                                          Ιf
you've got the individual docket number, that would be
helpful.
                             It's Cantrell, the docket number
         MS. LOCKARD:
                       I do.
is 2019-cv-14891.
         JUDGE KUGLER: That's Cantrell, and it's 19-14891.
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             What's the next one?
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             MS. LOCKARD: DeShields, and the number is 20-01030.
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             The next one is -- I'll spell it, F-O-U-G-E-R-E,
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    first name Therese and that is No. 19-17597, and the fourth
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    one is Jones, Philip, the number is 20-cv-2795.
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             The next one is Pittman, Charleston, No.
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    2019-cv-15638. And the sixth one is William, Charles,
    2019-cv-07632.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: All right. Anybody want to be heard
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    on behalf of the plaintiffs on these matters?
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             MS. PADDEN: Kristin Padden from Douglas and London.
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    Kristin Padden, P-A-D-D-E-N, is the last name, and we
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    represent Plaintiffs DeShields and Jones. I'll address Jones
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    first. We served a plaintiff fact sheet last evening on --
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    through MDL and Centrality, we also sent a courtesy copy to
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    Seth Goldberg last night. We believe the fact sheet is
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    materially complete. It's been signed by the plaintiffs and
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    it should meet all of the requirements, so we believe he
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    should be removed from this list. I apologize for the
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    lateness, we just received it yesterday and managed to upload
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    it last night.
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             JUDGE KUGLER:
                           Okay.
23
             MS. PADDEN: For Ms. DeShields, we have unfortunately
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    been unable to speak with her for quite some time. The last
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    time we spoke with her was several months ago and she had
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advised us that due to the length of the fact sheets, she no longer wanted to proceed with her case. We have been trying to memorialize that in writing from her, so that we can either secure a stipulation to dismiss her case or produce the plaintiff fact sheet.

At this time, we would respectfully request an additional 30 days to try and get her to sign off on dismissing her case, or if it needs to be dismissed at this point, we would ask that it be done without prejudice as we haven't been able to reach her. We've also been trying to reach family members of her to -- that were initially responsive and are no longer responsive and we're just trying to basically get her consent to dismiss the case at this point.

JUDGE KUGLER: Ms. Padden, I appreciate all of your efforts to try to come to a resolution on the DeShields matter, but I'm going to deny your request and we're going to grant the defendants' motions to dismiss Cantrell, DeShields and I guess you pronounce this Fougere, F-O-U-G-E-R-E, Pittman, and Williams.

As to Jones, anybody on the defense side want to comment? Ms. Padden says they submitted that last night.

MR. GOLDBERG: Your Honor, this is Seth Goldberg, and I am going back to my e-mail from last night and I do see an e-mail from Ms. Padden at 7:06. I did not see that last

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I think last month or maybe two months ago during our conference with Judge Schneider, we tried to clarify for plaintiffs who on our defense team should receive these kinds of e-mail, because others are really focused on these issues. So I'm going to forward this to our colleagues and they can get in touch with Ms. Padden and talk about Jones. say it doesn't need to be dismissed today. JUDGE KUGLER: We'll carry this for another listing then, this Jones matter, and we'll clean it up next time. Would you give me the second listing on Page 3 of your letter? I can't follow this, because in the body of your first paragraph, you say there are six cases but you only list four, and you asked for an order to show cause, but there seems to be a second listing. So what is it you want me to do with these four or six cases or whatever it is? MS. GOLDENBERG: Your Honor, this is Marlene Goldenberg. Before we go off of the last list, I've been serving as liaison counsel for all of the plaintiffs who have cases on this list. And the attorneys from the Law Offices of John D. Sileo on No. 5 on the first table have told me that late last night, they submitted the PFS for Charleston Pittman as well. And, Your Honor, we did review the MS. LOCKARD:

we refused that one and it still is woefully deficient and we

This is Victoria Lockard. We did see that one and

1 do believe there are significant core deficiencies throughout 2 that plaintiff's fact sheet and at this late date, to serve 3 it, you know, the evening before show cause order of dismissal is set to be imposed and we just don't think that's 4 5 sufficient. 6 Now, my colleague, Steve Harkins can address the 7 specific deficiencies within that plaintiff's fact sheet if Your Honor desires, but we still think that should be 9 dismissed. 10 JUDGE KUGLER: Well, I don't have it before me, so 11 it's kind of tough for me to make a decision on whether it 12 complies with the requirements without seeing it. 13 MS. LOCKARD: Right. Unfortunately, we just -- it 14 was just served on us late last night, so we were not -- so 15 you do not have that before you. 16 JUDGE KUGLER: Well, is it signed by the plaintiff? 17 Let's start with that. 18 MS. LOCKARD: I'm going to refer to Steve Harkins so 19 he can address the specific questions about the Pittman fact 20 sheet. 21 MR. HARKINS: Hi, Your Honor, this is Steve Harkins 22 from Greenberg Traurig for the Teva defendants in the defense 23 We did receive a plaintiff fact sheet from Ms. Pittman 24 at 9:53 last night. The plaintiff fact sheet is signed. 25 However, it does not indicate use of Valsartan, it does not

claim an injury, cancer or otherwise. It does not claim any damages with respect to the case.

Large portions of it that we think are basic and core case information have been left entirely blank, and we're perfectly willing to work with the plaintiff's individual counsel on resolving those types of deficiencies, but other than indicating Valsartan use with no specificity and not providing any records actually demonstrating Valsartan use, you know, there's nothing at all for us to even evaluate on this plaintiff fact sheet, so we would still ask for dismissal with respect to this case.

I would note that this was originally filed in January. The first plaintiff fact sheet should have been due in March. This case is now five months overdue and this is the third time it has been present on the Court's agenda list.

MR. NIGH: Daniel Nigh for the plaintiffs. I want to reiterate that in Benicar, we did exactly what Your Honor stated initially, which is if it's a verified PFS that's submitted, as soon as that occurred, then it goes through the deficiency stage. So here, we would just ask and request that, you know, now that there's a verified PFS that's been submitted, you know, the deficiency stage rolls through, that this plaintiff had time to cure the deficiencies that they had with the evidence.

JUDGE KUGLER: All right. Well, we'll transfer this

one to next month, the Pittman matter. Try to work out your deficiencies. If you can't work out your deficiencies, you can tee it up with the next conference and I'll make a decision if there's still a contest over whether that case should be dismissed.

MS. LOCKARD: Thank you, Judge.

So that brings us to the new listing, and I believe there are just four that are on the chart. I think our letter said six, but this has been a rolling process with working out some of these issues and trying to whittle this down to the final list. So I can go through those.

We have the Needy case, which is 19-cv-15051, the second is Stano, David, 19-cv-18080. The third is the Thompson, Kim case, 19-cv-15135, and the last on the list --actually, it's the last on the list is the Wilson Winifried case, and we have agreed to take that off of the show cause list as of late yesterday. So if I may correct my statement, we're just seeking show cause on the first three.

Now, there has been an indication that plaintiffs' counsel intends to dismiss two of these cases, I believe the Needy and the Stano case, however, they haven't been dismissed yet and we don't think that should interrupt the process that the Court has in place for any show cause orders. We would like to get a show cause order entered, and if plaintiffs' counsel seeks to dismiss voluntarily in the interim before the

1 next CMC, you know, certainly that's their prerogative. 2 JUDGE KUGLER: For the plaintiffs, any objection to 3 issuing an order to show cause, why these shouldn't be 4 dismissed for the three remaining plaintiffs, which are Needy 5 and Stano and Thompson? 6 MS. GOLDENBERG: Your Honor, this is Marlene 7 Goldenberg for the plaintiffs. I did just want to correct one 8 statement. My understanding is that the two cases that are 9 going to be dismissed are Nos. 1 and 3 on the table and that's 10 Needy and Thompson. 11 We are not going to object to the show cause orders 12 because these cases -- because plaintiffs' counsel for those 13 clients have indicated that they want to dismiss those cases 14 I will point out that there are some reasons here 15 that the defendants have listed that we don't believe are core 16 but because the cases are going away anyway, we don't feel 17 it's necessary to use the Court's time to argue those today. 18 JUDGE KUGLER: Okay. Those three will be listed for 19 an order to show cause why they shouldn't be dismissed at the 20 next meeting. 21 And then that leaves a whole bunch of first listings. 22 MS. LOCKARD: Yes, and, Your Honor, we have now 23 worked out what I think everyone agrees is a pretty good 24 process for the back and forth on this with periodic meet and

confers which our firm and Ms. Goldenberg's firm are leading,

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and so that has been a good process for getting these whittled down. So I imagine this will be limited and reduced by the next time of the CMC, but we will just continue that process and then list whatever -- whichever cases we believe are for this process at that time if that suits Your Honor. JUDGE KUGLER: Well, you have 19 listed up to Page 17, so we will relist them again for next month, see what happens. And then you have three more cases at Page 18 of your letter, where you say that fact sheets are overdue, correct? MS. LOCKARD: Correct. Those are cases where no fact sheets have been submitted whatsoever, but it is the first listing on the Court's agenda. MS. McLAFFERTY: Your Honor, if I could address No. 2 on that list, Raymond Betz -- this is Irene McLafferty from Messa & Associates. We did file a plaintiff's fact sheet July 28th, so I'm not sure why that is going up on the list. My office checked this morning. It's listed as having been filed on July 20th on MDL Centrality. So that is something that needs to be taken off the list. JUDGE KUGLER: Defendants have any knowledge of that on the Betz matter, B-E-T-Z? MS. LOCKARD: Yes, Your Honor, we are aware of that case and have reviewed what has been submitted and provided that it is complete and not deficient on the core issues, we

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    will be taking it off of the list.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: All right. Let's take Betz off the
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    list for the time being. We can always renew your application
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    at the next case management conference.
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             MS. LOCKARD:
                           Thank you, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: So Virginia Bowden or Bowden matters
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    will be listed again for next meeting.
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             Anything else on these orders to show cause or
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    listings that we want to talk about?
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             MS. LOCKARD: Not from the defendants, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: Any other issues for the plaintiffs on
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    these listings?
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             MS. GOLDENBERG: No, Your Honor.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: Okay. Great. Anything else you need
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    to talk -- I understand you had a conference, a productive
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    conference with Judge Schneider. Anything else that we need
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    to discuss with me at this point?
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             MR. SLATER: From the plaintiffs' perspective,
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    nothing, Your Honor. I think we covered plenty of ground with
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    Judge Schneider.
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             JUDGE KUGLER: Good.
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             MR. GOLDBERG: Same with the defense, Your Honor.
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                                   Then let's -- they keep telling
             JUDGE KUGLER: Okay.
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    me I want to get you into a courtroom at the courthouse and
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    things conspire against that. But I'm still trying to do
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that. We do have a courtroom open. The biggest impediment, actually I see that meeting in the courthouse are the quarantine orders in effect in New Jersey. The governor took a bunch of states off yesterday but we still have 31 states and territories on our quarantine order in New Jersey.

So if you wanted to attend one of these meetings from out of state and you're on one of those states, you'd have to quarantine in New Jersey for 14 days, which I don't wish on anybody.

So let's -- let's tentatively plan on coming to the courthouse for our September meeting.

Now, I'll be in touch with you and I know you need some lead time if you're coming from out of state and, obviously, if these quarantine orders remain in effect at the end of September, I'm not going to make anybody come for that, but we're going to have to limit the number of people who come into the courtroom, because we need to keep the social distancing. So we're going to have to limit the numbers who come in. You're going to have to wear masks. We do have Plexiglass barriers up everywhere, by counsel tables, between the seats and all those kinds of things.

I'll be in touch with you, the Court will be in touch with you a couple of weeks in advance of that date and tell you where we stand and to give you more of the rules and regulations about coming into the courthouse at that time.

/	2500 [1] - 2:13	9:58 [1] - 3:2	aided [1] - 1:25	BARNES [1] - 2:16
	26 [4] - 1:6, 3:1, 14:13,		alert _[2] - 19:21, 31:14	barriers [1] - 42 :20
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